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THE  
BONNEWITZ  
PEONY  
CATALOGUE



AND THE STORY OF  
AUNT NANCY'S AND AUNT MARY'S  
SWEET CORN



THE  
BONNEWITZ GARDENS  
VAN WERT OHIO





*The old Colonial home near Plain City, Ohio, in which for over eighty years, Aunt Nancy and Aunt Mary artificially ripened this corn.*



# THE STORY

OF

## Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn

The Highest Priced 85-Year-Old Corn  
in the World



**This pile of Corn Sold for \$142.50—\$17.50 per Pound.**

Cephas Atkinson, one of my daughter's great, great grandfathers, came to Ohio in 1812, while some of the Indians were still in the land. He settled in the Darby Plains near the center of the state, and in the 1830's, 40's and 50's before the railroads were built, he became a cattle buyer and drover, driving his cattle over the mountains to Philadelphia and other eastern markets.

At some time in his long life (none of his descendents know when or where), he came into possession of a sweet corn which I believe to be the very best in the world. There is no record whatever of its name, and not even a description of any corn with its outstanding characteristic, combined with its extremely high qualities, is found in any of the several recent histories of the development of corn as a food crop. It seems probable that Professor Essig of the California Department of Agriculture is correct, in his suggestion that this pioneer obtained the sweet corn from an Indian, or from some other pioneer who had thus obtained it.

I first became acquainted with the corn in 1900, when with Mrs. Bonnewitz I made a trip to the ancestral home of the Atkinsons in the Darby Plains. Here I met my wife's grandmother, the widow of John Atkinson who was the son of the 1812 pioneer.



## *Story of the Highest Priced Corn in the World*

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While eating of the corn which to me is sweeter, more tender and more delicate in its flavor than any other, I asked her the name of the variety and where she had procured it. She then told me of Cephas, the original Ohio Atkinson, who had obtained it before her marriage into the family in 1850, and also that during all the thirty-five years in which she had been mistress of the home, that she herself had gathered it and ripened the corn indoors, sometimes in unfavorable years bringing it to the warmth of the kitchen stove.

Her son William's wife, Mary Atkinson had become mistress of the old home in 1884, and Aunt Mary herself at that time told me that she had continued grandmother's custom of gathering the green corn and ripening it indoors.

I met also at that time another Cephas Atkinson, a banker, and a grandson of the pioneer Cephas. This grandson was younger even than my wife, who belonged to the next generation, being herself a great granddaughter. I was immediately attracted by the personality of this young man, and by that of his wife Alma, and on that day, a generation ago, a friendship was established which I value very much, and which I am sure will continue as long as we live. This cousin also had this corn growing in his garden, and we commented upon the fact that we had never eaten any other sweet corn which compared with it in quality, but neither of us at that time had any idea that there were no other plantings of this variety in the world.

Seed of it was given to me, and when I, like ninety per cent of all others to whom it had ever been given, had lost all my seed on account of failing to bring the ears indoors to ripen, then another planting was given to me. My own farmer failed to ripen a single ear of it in 1933, and when in the following spring I began to think that growing sweet corn might be more profitable than managing a department store or growing peonies, I wrote to my friend Cephas, sent him a dollar bill, and asked him to send me a quart of seed. He answered promptly, returned my dollar, and sent me a small box containing about four ounces of seed, and in his letter he said that he did not believe there was even a peck of seed of this wonderful corn in all the world. Of course this made me more anxious than ever to grow it commercially.

When I first received the seed, I had given my brother Van, a planting of it, and he quickly appreciated the quality and had been more careful than my own farmer in saving seed of it. When I told him of its scarcity, and that I wished to grow it commercially he very generously gave me two quarts of seed. He had given a planting of it to his neighbor, Luman Balyeat, who in his turn had given a planting to my friend, Jessie Vorpe, who I am sure was glad to be able to give me eight good ears of it.

One quart of my brother's seed I planted in newly plowed ground in my garden, but the drouth in May and June and



## *The Oldest Sweet Corn in the World*

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the great heat ruined it completely. The other quart I unfortunately planted on a south slope somewhat later in the season. When it was three feet high the terrific heat for more than a week caused it to wilt and droop every day, but each night it would freshen itself and endure the heat of the following day but the ears which matured on it were small, and the crop was very light.

The eight ears given me by my friend, gave me enough grains to plant sixteen rows each containing ninety-six hills. I planted this very late in June in my own garden and gave it my own personal care, getting a great thrill in the thought that I might be saving for the world, the most valuable corn in it.



*This was the home of Mrs. Mary Atkinson who for fifty (50) years (1885-1934 inclusive) gathered this corn and artificially ripened the seed in the house, some times even bringing it to the warmth of the kitchen stove. With her permission I have given it the name "Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn"*

My lot is an extremely long one and the rear of it is on the bank of a creek, and for years men and boys had used the creek bank as a short cut for destinations beyond my lot. As the ears began to grow in size, I realized the very great temptation that it would be, to hungry persons passing the tempting ears, to take a dozen home with them for dinner.

This corn was too precious for dinners even for the governor of the state, and so I went to a former gardener of mine, now past eighty years of age, and asked him if I could



## *The Newest Variety Sweet Corn on the Market*

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hire him to watch it for me. We quickly made a bargain, but he informed me that he could not look after it for the entire twenty-four hours. I went to another friend of mine who was three or four weeks out of the hospital, but whom the doctors would not allow to do any manual labor, and he was glad to assume half of the responsibility. I furnished these two men a tent, lanterns, chairs, and promised them a bonus if not a single ear was taken, and for two very good reasons, I am glad to report that the bonus was earned, and that the entire crop from the 1,536 hills was all gathered and every ear ripened in my own basement.

While my men were watching the corn I received a message that Aunt Mary was ill, and might never be able to plant another garden. Knowing that she probably had either a growing garden of the corn or some seed from former years, I made the one hundred and twenty mile trip to her home located between London and Plain City, Ohio, and found her extremely sick both physically and mentally. There was a long-term amortized mortgage on her farm, and within four weeks it was absolutely necessary for her to have \$142.50 to make the semi-annual payment, and she had no money at all.

I asked her how much seed she had of great grandfather Atkinson's sweet corn, and her son brought out a small metal trunk which contained the little pile of corn shown in the picture, and which I later found weighed eight pounds two ounces when shelled. She was delighted when I told her that I would give her the amount of money she needed for this seed which she had saved from her spring planting. I doubt very much that \$17.50 per pound has ever before or since been paid for a like amount of any variety of corn over seventy-five years old.

Fortunately her son had planted a large garden of it, and in October after she and her relatives had put up in cans, all they could use from the garden, and before the first frost of the season, I drove again to her home and gathered all the green ears which were still on the stalks. These I brought to my own home, where I ripened them in my basement, and when the next payment was due on the mortgage, I took care of it in payment of this green corn.

I tested every ear, and made a nice planting of it. It grew magnificently, and when the ears were ready for table use, I had my man load a small truck with it, and visit every grocery and restaurant in our city of 8,500 people. To every grocer, manager, and restaurant owner he gave a dozen ears of this corn, and to every salesman he gave a half dozen ears, telling all of them that it was "Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn," and that all of them should eat of it in their own homes. The next day he visited these business places again, and sold to eight of them the green corn to be placed on sale. The following day he sold sixteen of them, and at the end of







## *The Newest Variety Sweet Corn on the Market*

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the season we were regularly selling Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn to twenty-two individual stores.

Our season began August 20, and our crop was exhausted September 23, and in those thirty business days we sold over two thousand three hundred dozen ears of Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn at wholesale prices of from ten to twenty cents a dozen, in competition with Golden Bantam, Country Gentlemen and many other favorite varieties. In addition to our sales to the stores, corn lovers came to the farm and purchased this corn by the hundred weight for drying and canning.

I am publishing this fact, because I believe that a farmer or truck grower living near any town in the United States, can the first year build up as satisfactory a demand for Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn as I have done in my home town.

On account of the limited quantity, the price of seed for a few years will be higher than that of other corn, but one of our very live grocers told me that during the season his customers would buy from him no other sweet corn when Aunt Mary's was available. Another grocer told me that the quality of Aunt Mary's corn had increased his corn sales above the record of any other year, and still other, that his customers would pay an increased price for it over any other corn. I am sure you will agree with me that the first grower of Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn in any town will be able to out-sell his competitors and make a profit on the extra price he pays for the seed.

In Van Wert the seed will be on sale in different sized bags containing one eighth, one quarter, one half, and one full pound at all three of the seed stores: Campbell's — Gunsett's — Wilson & Girod's.

It is possible that later in the season I may find I have enough seed to sell it at wholesale to seedsmen in a few other towns, but now and until March, my main effort will be to sell it to commercial gardeners and to farmers living near enough to towns and cities to deliver the green corn very early in the morning to the local merchants.

If any reader of this article will send me the names and addresses of friends who are commercial gardeners, I will be glad to try to interest those friends, wherever located in growing Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn for market. We all know that every person in the world is vitally interested in food and also that the best foods advertise themselves quickly, as Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn has done.

I notice that I have neglected to say that I advertised my corn in our local papers, and I am glad to tell you that no food product was ever better advertised by the people who ate of it. Wherever men and women were congregated in friendly intercourse, someone was sure to remark upon the fact that Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn was better than any other



## The Oldest Sweet Corn in the World

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and of course this was better even than newspaper advertising.

Tourists who stopped for a meal at our restaurants and visitors who were entertained in Van Wert homes often purchased the green corn to take with them to their families. Friends, acquaintances and even men whose names I do not know, seemed to take delight in greeting me upon the street or highway with the name "*Aunt Mary*" as if I were Aunt Mary herself, all of which I took as a tribute to the quality of Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn.

**LEE R. BONNEWITZ,**

Van Wert, Ohio

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## AUNT MARY'S SWEET CORN SEED

One-eighth pound bag (over 250 grains)	25 Cents
One-quarter pound bag (over 500 grains)	50 Cents
One-half pound bag (over 1000 grains)	\$1.00
One pound bag (over 2000 grains)	\$2.00

Postage Paid every where



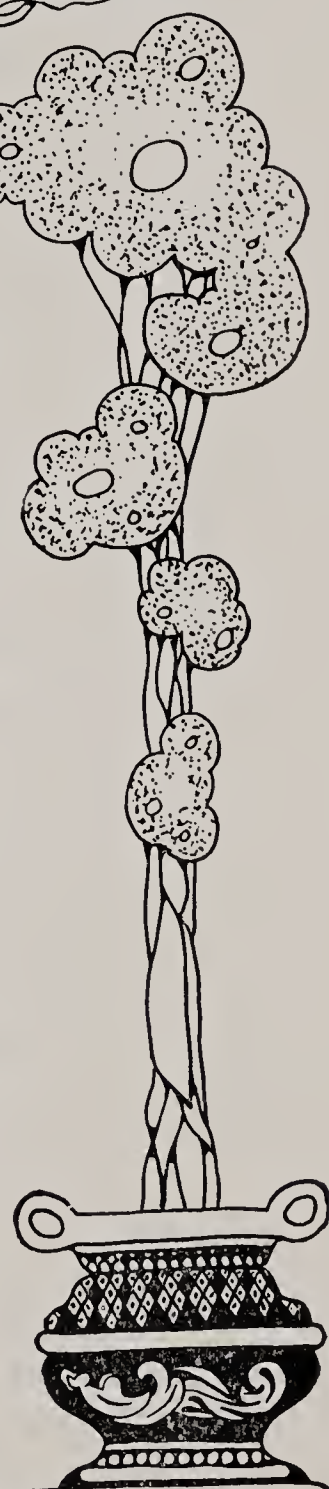
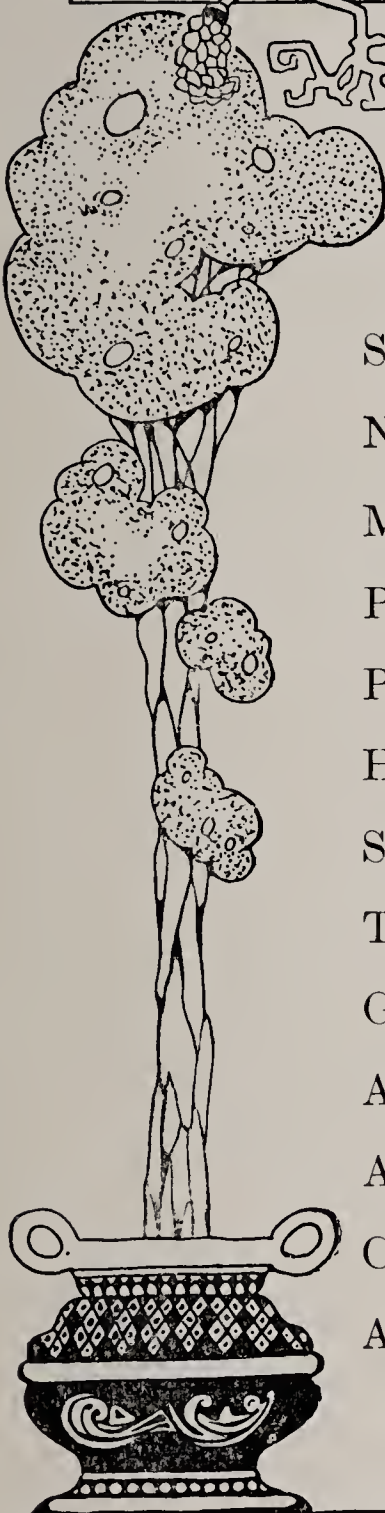




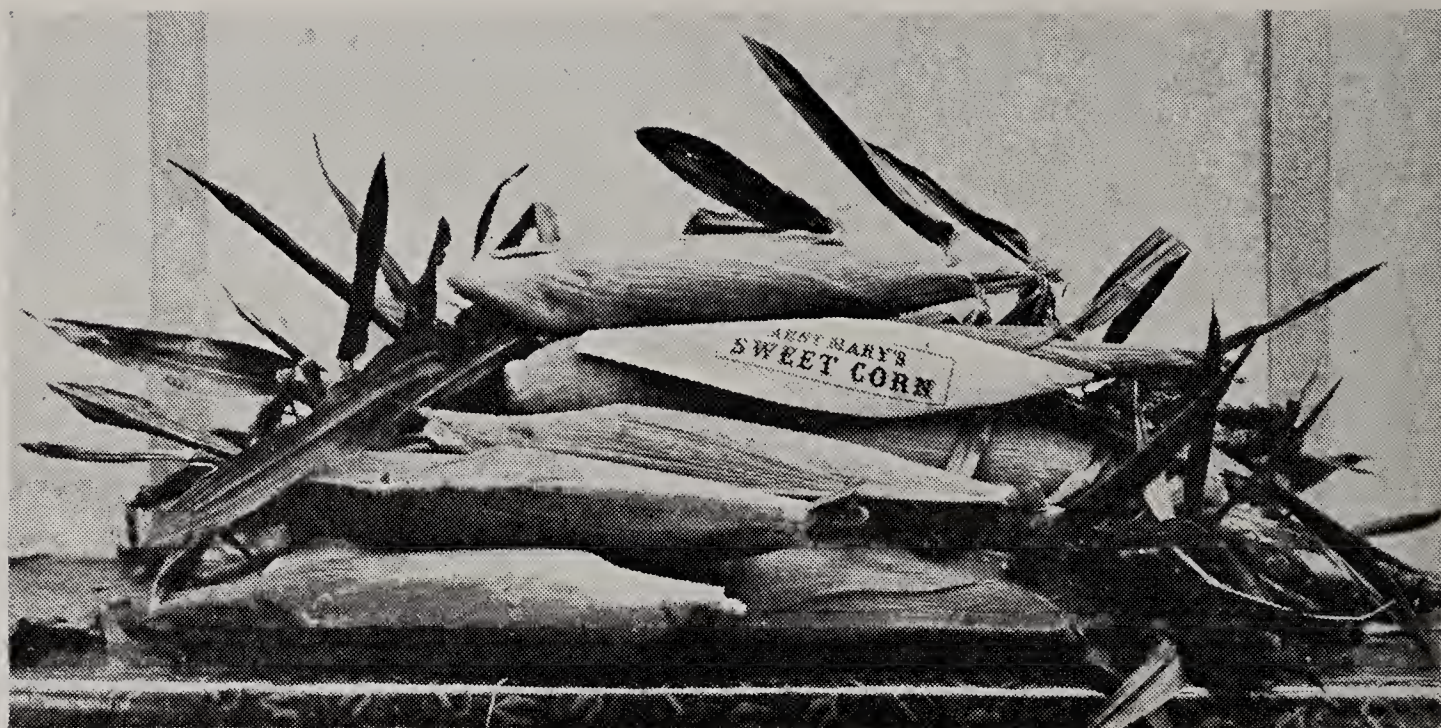


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## THE SWEET CORN STORY

My daughter, Alice, just like your daughters, and also just like your sons, has in her ancestral line, four maternal great, great grandfathers. One of these, Cephas Atkinson by name, came to Ohio in 1812 before the Indians had entirely left the state of Ohio. Please remember this reference to the Indians, for the Indians of 1812 were real flesh and blood Indians whose squaws helped them plant and harvest corn and who used it as a standard article of food.

This great, great grandfather became a large landholder, and in the 1830's, 40's and 50's, before the railroads were built, he engaged in the business of buying livestock from the farmers, and driving his purchases on the hoof, over the mountains to Philadelphia and other Eastern cities.

Sometime before 1850, (none of his descendants know of either the time or place), he came into possession of a white sweet corn, which seldom ripens in the garden or field. It is believed that the excessive amount of sugar in it, causes it to ferment and quickly decay during the fall rains, when the moisture penetrates the expanding husks and comes in contact with the unripe corn.

As the men gathered their seed corn in the fall, the women in the family found that if they would preserve this corn, which everybody liked so much, they could not wait for the men to harvest it, so they adopted the custom of gathering each year, the few ears necessary for seed while it was still green, and then ripened it in the house.

Cephas' son, John, married Nancy Phillips in 1850, and she told me before her death, that during every one of the thirty-five years



in which she was mistress of the Atkinson home, she gathered enough of this corn for seed, while it was still in the milk or dough stage, and that she ripened it artificially. In 1884, her son, William, married Mary Stevens of the Lancaster family of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and during the entire fifty years in which she has been mistress of the home, she also gathered this corn and ripened it indoors, sometimes bringing it to the warmth of the kitchen fire. They gave freely of the seed to neighbors and friends, and during the 85 years in which these two women gathered this corn, it is probable that a hundred or more families had it growing in their kitchen gardens.

When I married into the family in 1900, seed was given to me, but like everybody else except Aunt Nancy and Aunt Mary, I lost it, but a fresh supply was always available at Aunt Mary's. My own farmer did not succeed in saving a single ear of it in 1933.



*Artificially ripening Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn, in an attic room in her home.*

Last summer I heard that Aunt Mary was on her death bed, and I traveled across the state to pay her a visit. I found her not only sick physically, but also greatly depressed mentally. Eventually I discovered that there was a \$1,400 mortgage on the small farm, which she had succeeded in saving out of the 1928 farm collapse in Ohio, and that she could see no way of paying her mortgage, her interest, and insurance. *I believe this white sweet corn is the best in the world*, and finding that everyone to whom she and Aunt Nancy had given it, had lost their entire seed crop just as I had



done, I encouraged her by saying, that I believed her sweet corn was valuable enough to pay off her mortgage, and I volunteered to try to help her accomplish this.

Fortunately, early in the spring her son had planted an unusual amount of it in her garden. He showed me all that was left of the seed after the garden had been planted, (less than ten pounds on the cob), and as she needed \$142.50 immediately, for a payment on her mortgage, interest and other necessary expenses, I paid her that amount for it, (over \$14.00 per pound), and I am glad to say that her health began to improve.



*Nine pounds, ten ounces of seed corn on the cob, for which I paid \$142.50—over \$14.00 per pound.*

When the corn in her garden was ready for use, I took sample baskets of it, to a produce buyer with a large selling organization, and after eating of it in his own home, he has promised that during the 1935 season, he will send his own trucks twenty-six miles to her farm to get this corn, and that owing to its unusual quality, he will pay a higher price for it than for any other corn. I took other baskets of this corn to a produce buyer in a city thirty-six miles from my own home, and this buyer also was so impressed with the quality of the corn, that he suggested that I should grow 25 acres of it, and that he would send his trucks to my farm and pay me the highest market price for his share of it, and retail it at a price higher than ordinary sweet corn. You will agree with me that Aunt Mary has reason to feel encouraged with the approval “quantity buyers” have given to the quality of her corn.

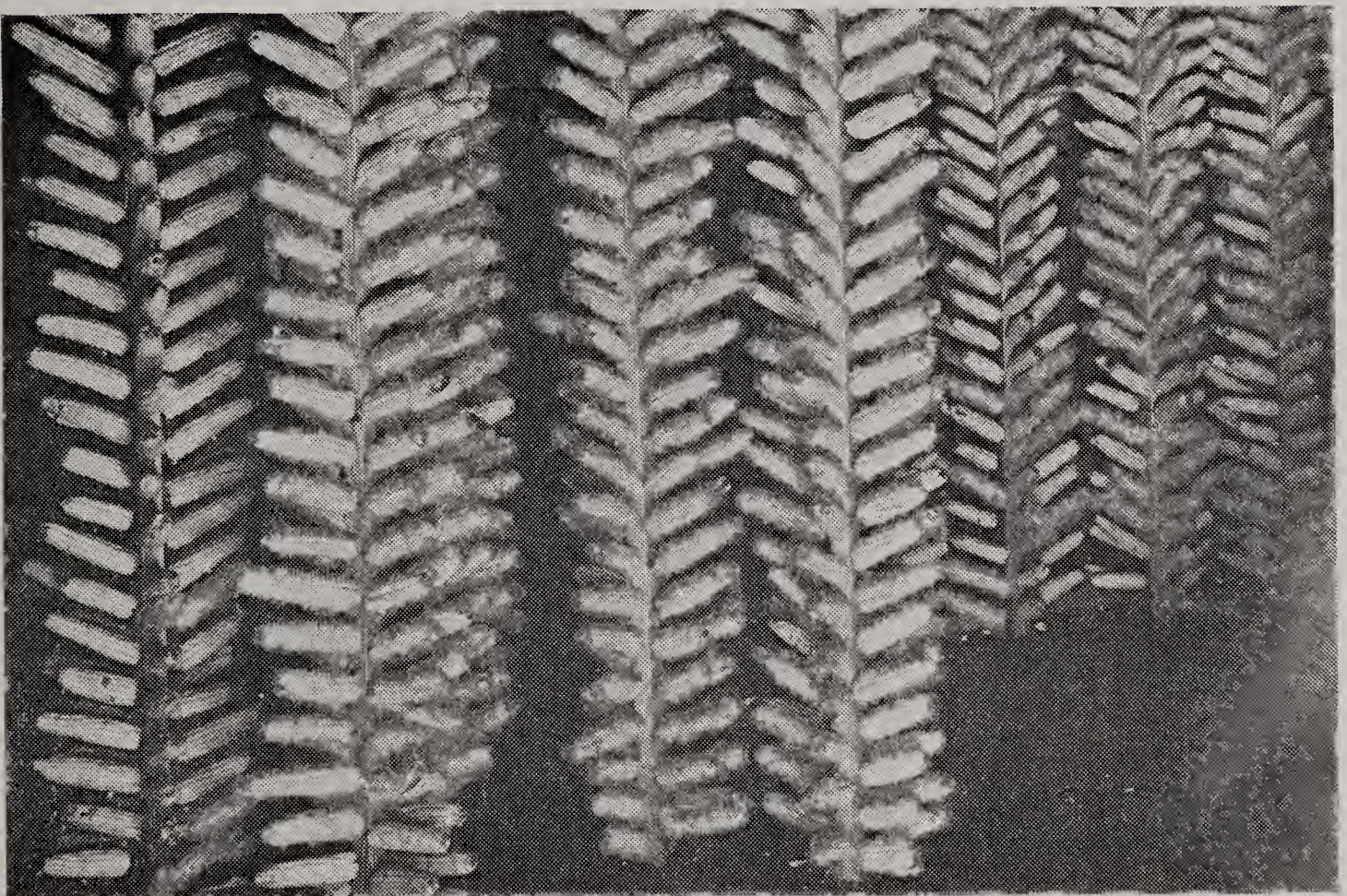
A few days before frost came, I took a truck to Aunt Mary’s home, and gathered all her green corn, and brought it to my own home, one hundred and twenty miles distant, where I husked the corn and impaled the individual ears on nails driven into studding, which I had erected in the basement. I placed in the window, an exhaust fan with a capacity of one thousand cubic feet of air per minute, and in this manner by continually drawing fresh dry air over it, I ripened enough corn to plant 25 acres of it this spring, and



also to plant another twenty-five acres next spring to use in case I do not succeed in saving seed of it this year. For this corn which I ripened myself, I gave her \$147.50 which paid the next semi-annual installment on the mortgage and interest, and also paid her insurance.

During August and September I expect to sell a limited amount of the green corn in order to establish its reputation as *the best white sweet corn in the world*, after which I hope during the next few years to sell enough of the artificially ripened seed to pay off the mortgage.

After the corn was ripened and properly stored for the winter I took some of it with me on a California trip. While visiting my daughter, the wife of a naval officer living in Coronado, I approached the farm advisor of San Diego County telling him I was



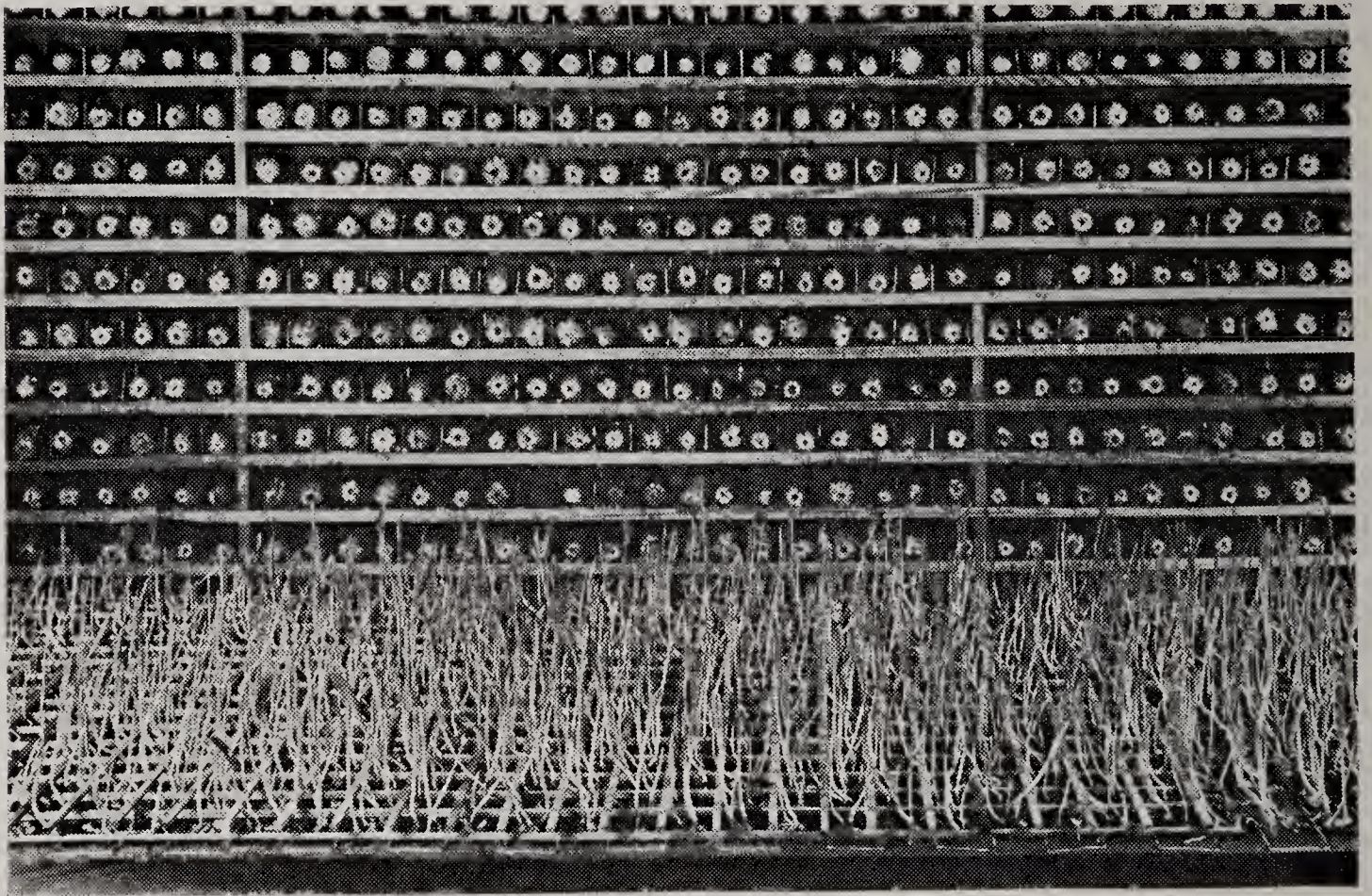
*Artificially ripening Aunt Mary's Sweet Corn in Mr. Bonnewitz's basement during October and November, 1934, an exhaust fan is drawing one thousand cubic feet of warm dry air per minute over the corn.*

seeking a place where I could grow and successfully ripen *the best white sweet corn in the world*. I had expected to receive a welcome and I was very greatly surprised when he said, with a triumphant smile on his face, "Don't bring your sweet corn here, Mr. Bonnewitz. Our weather in San Diego county, the Southern-most county in the state, is altogether too cold for growing and ripening sweet corn." This statement, if published, certainly should bring the summer tourists.



I wrote to the farm advisor in Imperial county, just directly east and across the mountains from San Diego county and I immediately received a reply. "Don't bring your sweet corn here, for it is so hot that it will burn the pollen." I found later that black Mexican sweet corn is the only successful sweet corn for that hot climate.

Next I went up to Los Angeles county, where I was told the weather was too damp and foggy, and that while I might grow some sweet corn for sale as green corn, and succeed in saving part of it from the ear worms, yet, in the extra time necessary for ripening it, the ear worms, which never freeze in California, would make the commercial seed crop very hazardous.



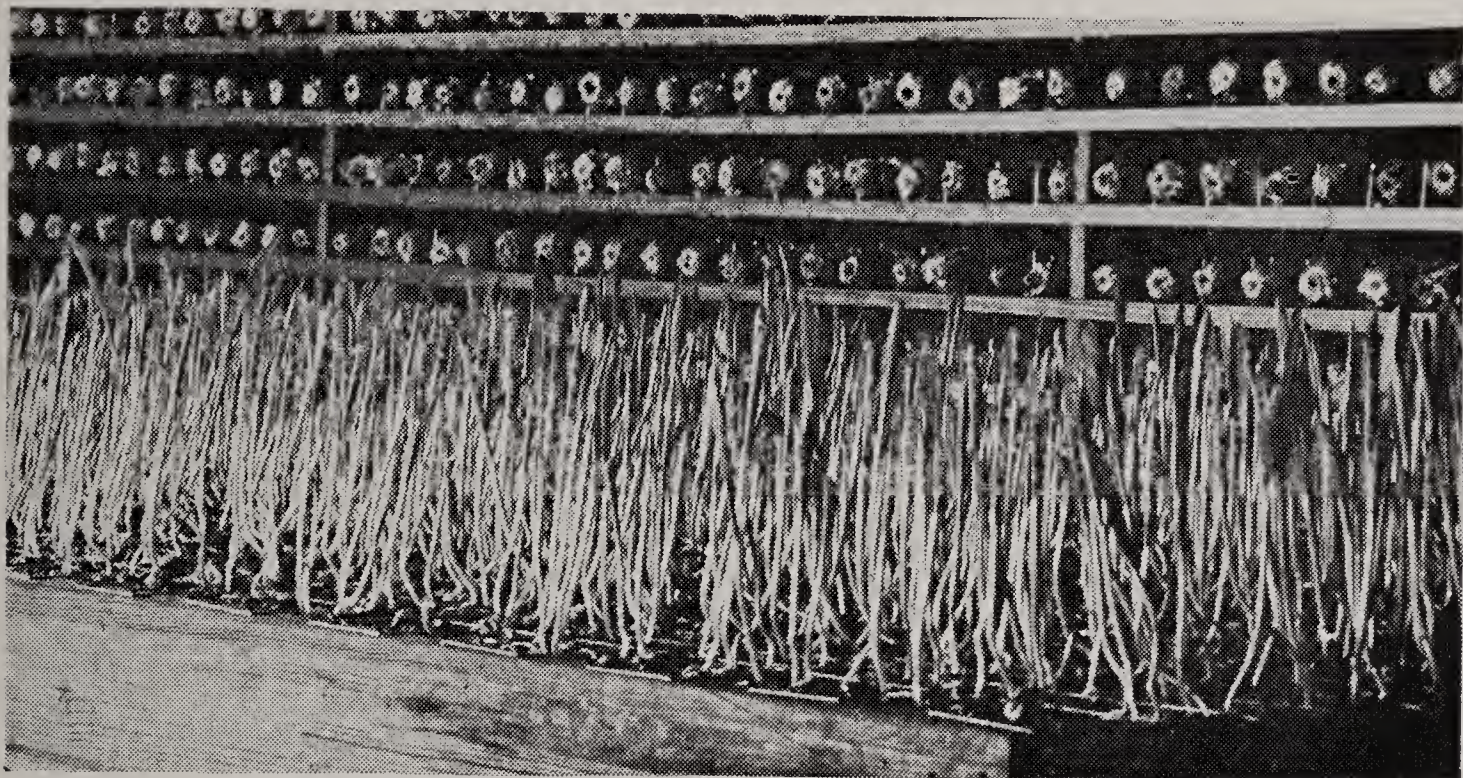
*Testing Aunt Mary's and Aunt Nancy's Sweet Corn seed for fertility in March, 1935. Three grains, taken one from each end and one from the middle of the ear, were planted in individual squares in the seed bed, and each individual square was numbered to correspond to the number on the ear from which the grains were taken. Over a thousand ears were tested in each single planting.*

Fortunately for me, all the farm advisors in California were spending the entire week at the Agricultural College of the State University in Berkeley, where they were meeting with the superintendent and all the specialists of the state experiment agricultural farm. Good fortune was with me here also, for my friend, Henry Washburn, is the farm advisor for Santa Cruz county. I wired him to invite all the farm advisors of all the counties where corn could be grown, to take lunch with me on the following Wednesday, and he did his work so well that at our table, we had the President of the Agricultural College, the Superintendent and the corn expert



from the experiment station, and several of the county agents. They gave me a hearing and when I had stated my case, they un-animously agreed that the solution of my problem lay in dehydrat-ing my seed crop, exactly as California growers dehydrate walnuts. This I am preparing to do, but the story does not end here.

I have a friend, Professor Essig, an Iris grower, who is one of the instructors in that same agricultural college, and I went over to call on him to talk Iris, and incidentally I told him the story of the corn. He was greatly interested, more so I believe than anyone else to whom I had previously told the story. Here was his reaction: "Mr. Bonnewitz, it is natural that the Atkinson family should think



*The planting of the corn shown in this basement test was finished at 11 A.M. on March 5 and the photograph was taken at 10 A.M., March 14. This shows great vigor, but the corn planted in the field on April 24, May 4 and May 11 did not grow so rapidly because the season was late. But you should have seen the very, very rapid growth when the warm spring days arrived.*

that the old, great, great grandfather procured that corn on one of his cattle trips in the East, but I am quite sure they are mistaken. There is no record of such a corn as you describe, and it is my belief that the old pioneer either procured his original planting stock from an Indian, or from some other person who had procured it from an Indian. I have read that one Indian chief alone, had over five hundred acres of corn, and we must remember that corn was a much more important article of food among the Indians than it is with us." He advised me to study the history of the use of corn among Ohio Indians. In doing so I was rewarded by finding this reference to it in one of General Wayne's last reports to the govern-ment after his final victory. In his report, Wayne speaks of the site as "The grand emporium of the hostile Indians, where the margins



of these two beautiful Ohio rivers appear like one continued village for a number of miles both above and below this place; *nor have I ever beheld such fields of corn.*" This I think gives a new light on the extent to which corn was used by the Indians just a few years before the pioneer grandfather came to Ohio.

After finishing my visit with Professor Essig, I went to Palo Alto, California, to see my friend, Doctor W. F. Wight of the United States Department of Agriculture. He, in conjunction with Leland Stanford University, is devoting his life to developing a strain of peach trees which will waken from their winter slumber and put forth buds, blossoms, leaves, and fruit, for our Eastern peach trees when planted in Southern California, fail to notice any difference in the climate of January and April, thus remaining dormant.

Of course I could not refrain from telling him my sweet corn story just as I have told it to you, concluding with Professor Essig's statement that he believed the corn had been originated by the Indians, and I am glad to give you Doctor Wight's reply. "Mr. Bonnewitz, I am not prepared to tell you whether an Indian, an American or a Mexican originated your corn, but I believe I can state it as a fact that no one, whatever his nationality, originated that corn in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, or in any other state which joins them. If you have correctly told all the facts concerning it, this corn must have originated in some protected valley which had a very long ripening season, and which had no rain until the following spring. Such valleys are found in some parts of California and possibly in old Mexico, Arizona, and New Mexico."

I of course do not know whether or not this is an old Indian corn, and I do not tell this story to create the impression that it is. But if Professor Essig is correct in his surmise, there have undoubtedly been many Aunt Nancys and Aunt Marys among the Indians, as this corn passed as a friendly gift from one tribe to another.

## Seed of Aunt Mary Atkinson's Sweet Corn

Everyone who has read the story of Aunt Mary Atkinson's sweet corn, knows that I am endeavoring to pay off her mortgage, from the sale of seed of this excellent and interesting variety.

I am telling this story to all my six thousand or more peony, Iris and poppy customers, for I am sure that among them are many persons who like to eat corn on the cob as well as I, but I do not ask anyone to buy seed of it from me, or from Aunt Mary without eating of it, or without having some friend eat of it. Van Wert is



on the Lincoln highway, U. S. Route 30, and also upon North and South route 127, and nearly everybody can find some friend who will be passing through Van Wert in August or September.

Every hotel and restaurant, and we have great reason to be proud of our hotels and restaurants, will have an opportunity to serve Aunt Mary's corn fresh every day, and every one of them will have had the same instructions for cooking it which you will find in this booklet. I am even hoping that some of you will tell your traveling friends that they should stop in Van Wert for the express purpose of trying the sweet corn which two widows kept alive for 85 years.

But there is a more convenient method still, and here it is. You have no doubt noticed the picture of the very old colonial home on the inside front page of this booklet. This house was built by John Atkinson, (son of the great, great grandfather who first procured the corn), about 1850, as a home for his bride, Nancy Phillips, and here for thirty-five years she artificially ripened the corn. To this same home came Mary Stevens the bride of William Atkinson in 1884 and in it for nearly fifty years (until she lost the farm), she ripened this same corn. This home is located near Plain City, Ohio, and one of the Atkinson cousins whose friendship I very much appreciate, has sent me the names of ten of its citizens who have been purchasers of this corn for use in their families. I have met only one of them and I presume none of the others have ever even heard of me. If you are enough interested in this corn to think of buying some seed of it, I suggest that you write one or more of these persons asking their opinion of the Atkinson corn.

Of course you will include in your letter either a self-addressed envelope with the necessary three-cent stamp upon it, or a self-addressed post card. Here are the names, the address of each one of them being Plain City, Ohio. Mrs. F. B. McCullough, Mrs. J. W. Price, Mrs. Lura Kahler, Mrs. P. O. Robinson, Mrs. T. B. McKirgan, Mr. A. W. Cary, Mr. D. E. Currier, Mr. J. R. Woods, Mr. L. W. Cary, and Mr. W. F. Justice.

City dwellers will of course not be at all interested, unless they have nephews or nieces living in the country, or in a small village, who can grow this corn for sale to their neighbors, or to the village stores. I am growing golden bantam sweet corn on my farm, five miles out in the country, and last week, I sold over \$42.00 worth of it to the local grocers. Next week when Aunt Mary's sweet corn is ready for sale I expect to more than double my weekly sales.

Energetic boys and girls of fifteen years or over can probably do even better than I with my sixty-eight years. The green corn season is usually from six to ten weeks, and a local seed corn business on the *best sweet corn in the world* should add something additional to the money which many college students earn in vacation months.



Listen to this. If great, great grandfather Atkinson and his wife were wise in thinking that the sweet corn he procured was worth the effort to keep it alive; if Aunt Nancy and Aunt Mary did not waste their time for eighty-five years on this corn; if the citizens of Plain City are not mistaken when they tell you that this is the best corn in the world; if I have not been foolish in expending over \$500 on the purchase, dehydration and cultivation of this corn, with the thought in mind that with the ownership of it, I can pay the \$1,400 mortgage on the little farm near London, Ohio, which is all that Aunt Mary has succeeded in saving from the forced sale of the old Atkinson farm; if all these things which I have enumerated are true, then this corn is so valuable that at least one citizen in every one of the 14,000 towns and hamlets in the United States can put money in his pocket, by the sale both of green corn, and of seed of it for planting.

There is one way and only one way to find out whether all these things are true or not, and that way is very simple. It is the eating of the corn. All my time during the next four months, with the exception of that which I will spend in dehydrating the corn for seed, and that which I must give to the shipping of my peonies and Iris, will be given to having as many persons as possible, from as many different communities as possible, eat of this corn.

My task then will be to find some person in each community who can get a vision of the usefulness of this corn in his neighborhood.

Here are the points of usefulness which he should confirm, and after he knows them to be true, then it will be time enough to extol them. First, I believe that it is sweeter than any other variety of white sweet corn. Second, while this corn is two weeks slower in being ready for the table than some other varieties, yet it retains its edibleness or good eating qualities longer than any other corn I have ever seen. Third, while its failure to ripen in the garden or field may be considered as a disadvantage, yet to the man who wishes to build up a seed trade on it, it is a very great advantage, for he can depend upon repeat orders for seed from his customers each year. Fourth, the size of the ear pleases both the grocer and the consumer of the corn. Fifth, its color is much more attractive than the yellow varieties which look like the corn we feed to animals.

If the prospective purchaser of seed corn discovers all these things to be true, then he can determine whether Aunt Mary Atkinson's sweet corn can bring him a reward for the efforts he places upon it.

I hope all readers will realize at the start that I would rather not sell them any seed, than to have them regret its purchase. If my customers are satisfied with it, their purchases and the purchases of their friends will bring me a little income long after Aunt Mary's mortgage has been paid in full.



About August 20, I expect to begin dehydrating Aunt Mary's sweet corn for seed, and by September 20, I hope to have enough of it for my own planting next year, and all the surplus after that date will be sold for seed in order to get money to pay off the mortgage. The time and equipment spent in getting the dampness out of this corn will of course make the seed somewhat more expensive than ordinary sweet corn, but *I will offer one-half pound of it, which will consist of at least eight hundred ripened grains, for \$1.00 post paid to any address in the United States.* The price should be lower next year, and still lower the following year. In case some of our readers would like to send their money direct to Aunt Mary to be applied on her mortgage they may address their letters

Aunt Mary Atkinson  
The sweet corn woman,  
R. R. No. 3,  
London, Ohio.

Postal money orders, drafts and checks are the safest means of sending money.

If you send your money direct to Aunt Mary, she will notify me, and I will send you the corn just the same as if you had sent the money to me, for we are both equally anxious to get the mortgage paid.

*Never boil corn—Boil the water—then remove from the stove and allow the water to stop bubbling. Drop in the corn and let it stand for ten minutes—or more if desired.*





## A Message of Encouragement

*"Beyond the material recovery, I sense a spiritual recovery as well. The people of America are now, as never before, turning to those permanent values which are not limited by the physical objectives of life. There are growing signs of this on every hand. In the face of these spiritual impulses, we are sensible of the Divine Providence to which nations, now, as always, turn for guidance and for fostering care."*

I like very much to quote the above encouraging words from one of President Roosevelt's messages to the people, because, for me at least, they are true. In 1927 after over forty years of active business experience, and at the age of sixty, I believed my material possessions were worth two hundred thousand dollars, and I am ashamed of it now, but I really thought I had lived a successful life. But with my spiritual senses awakening, I know that no life which at its culmination, can report only the accumulation of material things, even if these amount to millions in value, can be accounted successful.

In order that my life could become a successful one, it was necessary for me to turn to those "permanent values" in which material things have no part. I thank God that even at the cost of three-fourths, four-fifths, five-sixths, or even all of my worldly possessions that I have learned that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." I would gladly have given up every material possession, rather than to have had my spiritual understanding remain dormant.

The seven years depression, (it came to Ohio in 1928), has depleted my possessions at the rate of over twenty thousand dollars per year, more than four times as rapidly as I accumulated them. I am now paying my living expenses and publishing this booklet from the sale of my life insurance policies to the companies which issued them, and yet there is more happiness in my heart, than when I was receiving from eight to fifteen thousand dollars per year. Please notice that I did not say when I was "making" or "earning" from eight thousand to fifteen thousand dollars per year, for it has begun to dawn upon my spiritual understanding, that I (like many thousands of others with very much larger incomes than I, in the years of national prosperity), was after all, probably only a money changer, with ability to place myself in the position where money changing was profitable.

But now I am free. The property which I have lost does not now need my attention. I am free to try to help Aunt Mary pay her mortgage, and I am enjoying it like the games of my youth.



## Peonies for Fall Shipment

Many of our customers will be surprised to find that we are not offering individual peonies for sale this year. Instead of doing this, we have selected the following list of the best selling peonies in our garden, and have combined these varieties into eight different collections at prices ranging from \$5.00 to \$12.50 each. We are further offering over ninety additional varieties any one of which may be substituted for any variety in any one of the eight collections, so that every peony lover can get just exactly the peonies he wishes at collection prices. Make as many substitutions as you wish in each collection.

We have two objects in doing this. First we can sell a collection of six peonies cheaper than we can sell the six individual peonies; second, we can dig and ship collections in a much less time than we can fill orders for individual varieties. We are very anxious to save as much time as possible during the months of October and November, so that we can give that time to a sweet corn business, which we are conducting in the hope that it will help a widow lift a mortgage from her farm.

We hope you will turn to page 4 and read the story of an old variety of most excellent sweet corn, which has for the last fifty years been grown and artificially ripened for seed by a woman, now a widow, over seventy years of age.

### PEONIES IN THE COLLECTIONS

Every peony enthusiast in the United States either has ALICE HARDING, the original \$200.00 peony now growing in his garden, or he longs to have it there. See *Peony With a War Story*. He has already purchased TAMATE BOKU, the very finest pink Japanese peony in the world, ISIANI GIDUI, the purest white Japanese peony, and AMA-NO-SODE, the most spectacular one, or he is waiting for a favorable opportunity to buy them. Here is a list of fifteen other peonies, each with its own individual personality, which all peony lovers will concede are among the world's most interesting varieties.

MYRTLE GENTRY, one of our most beautiful light pink, double peonies, originated in the garden of America's most successful grower, Mr. A. M. Brand.

PHILIPPE RIVOIRE, the universally acknowledged best red, double peony.

LE CYGNE, or, (in English), THE SWAN, a magnificent white, double variety, the highest rated peony in the world.

PHYLLIS KELWAY, the very large semi-double brilliant pink peony, which wins prizes in peony shows, and makes beautiful border plantings.



## THE BONNEWITZ GARDENS, VAN WERT, OHIO

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KELWAY'S GLORIOUS, the very large pure white peony which made the name of Kelway famous.

LE JOUR, the best white single peony ever originated in America.

PALLAS, a pink variety which keeps Mr. Terry's fame alive though he has been dead many, many years.

PRIDE OF LANGPORT, the best late blooming pink single variety, which comes to us from England.

SOLANGE, the prize winner, which has probably won more prizes in peony shows than any other two varieties combined.

AUGUSTE DESSERT, a deep rose landscape variety which the most celebrated French grower thought good enough to bear his own name.

TOURANGELLE, our most dainty pink peony, whose blooms must be kept covered with bags as long as they remain in the garden.

LAURA DESSERT, the highest rated yellow peony, which also must be kept covered while in the garden, or we will miss seeing its famous color.

MINNIE SHAYLOR, the most beautiful, semi-double variety and the daintiest pink, with the tallest stems of any peony originated by Mr. Shaylor.

WALTER FAXON, the one peony which everybody admires, and which has given its own name to the particular pink shade of its flowers.

RICHARD CARVEL, the beautiful red peony, which can be relied upon to furnish color for Memorial Day in more northern states than any other peony.

### 1935 COLLECTION NO. 1

One Bonnewitz Two Eye Division of Each of the Following  
Peonies for \$12.50

Alice Harding  
Ama-no-sode

Isani Gidui  
Myrtle Gentry

Philippe Rivoire  
Tamate Boku

### 1935 COLLECTION NO. 2

One Bonnewitz Two Eye Division of Each of the Following  
Peonies for \$11.00

Alice Harding  
Kelway's Glorious

Le Cygne  
Minnie Shaylor

Tamate Boku  
Walter Faxon



**1935 COLLECTION NO. 3**

**One Bonnewitz Two Eye Division of Each of the Following  
Peonies for \$10.00**

Alice Harding	Ama-no-sode	Richard Carvel
Auguste Dessert	Phyllis Kelway	Tamate Boku

**1935 COLLECTION NO. 4**

**One Bonnewitz Two Eye Division of Each of the Following  
Peonies for \$9.00**

Alice Harding	Isani Gidui	Le Jour
Ama-no-sode	Laura Dessert	Pride of Langport

**1935 COLLECTION NO. 5**

**One Bonnewitz Two Eye Division of Each of the Following  
Peonies for \$8.00**

Alice Harding	Auguste Dessert	Philippe Rivoire
Ama-no-sode	Solange	Phyllis Kelway

**1935 COLLECTION NO. 6**

**One Bonnewitz Two Eye Division of Each of the Following  
Peonies for \$7.50**

Alice Harding	Isani Gidui	Pallas
Ama-no-sode	Laura Dessert	Tourangelle

**1935 COLLECTION NO. 7**

**One Bonnewitz Two Eye Division of Each of the Following  
Peonies for \$6.00**

Ama-no-sode	Kelway's Glorious	Phyllis Kelway
Auguste Dessert	Philippe Rivoire	Solange

**1935 COLLECTION NO. 8**

**One Bonnewitz Two Eye Division of Each of the Following  
Peonies for \$5.00**

Ama-no-sode	Philippe Rivoire	Richard Carvel
Kelway's Glorious	Phyllis Kelway	Walter Faxon

These collections will be sent by express, charges to be paid by purchaser, and if any shipment is lost, a duplicate shipment will be made without cost to the purchaser.



## VARIETIES WHICH MAY BE SUBSTITUTED

Any of the following varieties may be substituted for any variety in any collection, as long as our saleable supply of these extra varieties lasts. We may be willing to spare as few as a dozen roots of some of them, while of others we may be willing to include in collections, a hundred or more.

Albert Crousse	Karl Rosenfield	Primevere
Alma	Kelway's Glorious	Quaker Lady
Atrosanguinea	La Fraicheur	Rachel (Lemoine)
Auguste Dessert	Lady Alexandra Duff	Raoul Dessert
Aureolin	Langport Hero	Renee Dessert
Baroness Schroeder	Le Cygne	Reine Hortense
Ball o'Cotton	L'Etincelante	Renee Marie
Bayadere	Lora Dexheimer	Richard Carvel
Candeur	Luetta Pfeiffer	Rosa Bonheur
Charles Verdier	Mabel L. Franklin	Rosette
Coronation	Madame Emile Galle	Rose Shaylor
David Harum	Madame Gaudichau	Sarah K. Thurlow
Duchesse de Nemours	Madame Jules Dessert	Secretary Fewkes
E. B. Browning	Mafeking	Solange
E. G. Hill	Marguerite Gerard	Some-ganoko
Elwood Pleas	Marie Crousse	Sops of Wine
Exquisite	Martha Bulloch	Souvenir de A. Millet
Felix Crousse	Maud L. Richardson	Souv. de Louis Bigot
Festiva Maxima	Mignon	Strassburg
Floral Treasure	Mikado	Suzette
Frances Shaylor	Miss Henninger	Therese
Frances Willard	Monsieur Jules Elie	Thomas C. Thurlow
Galathee	Mont Blanc	Tokio
Georgiana Shaylor	Nymphaea	Tourangelle
Germaine Bigot	Octavie Demay	Tragedy
Henri Potin	Officinallis rubra	Umbellata Rosea
Inspecteur Lavergne	Opal	Walter Faxon
Isoline	Othello (Lemoine)	Welcome Guest
James R. Mann	Pasteur	W. F. Christman
Jeannot	Petite Renee	William F. Turner
Jubilee	Pierre Duchartre	Wilton Lockwood
Judge Berry	Pride of Langport	



# How Peonies Came to Van Wert

Forty or more years ago, Mrs. Sarah A. Pleas, a widow living in Spiceland, Indiana noticed some tiny plants growing under her peonies. Wondering what they might be, she carefully transplanted them to a new location where they would get plenty of sun, and where they could be regularly watered. In a few years she was rewarded by finding herself the owner of a great number of new peony plants. When they were all in bloom she was surprised to find that no two of the young plants had flowers alike, and was still more surprised to find that everyone of them differed, in both form and coloring from the mother plants. Such plants grown directly from seed as these were, are known in the peony world, as seedlings.

Mrs. Pleas preserved the plants whose flowers were the most outstanding in beauty, and she eventually divided the roots of each plant, and each individual piece of any root is, in the peony world, called a peony division, and all the divisions of any plant when old and strong enough to bloom, will carry exactly the same kind of flowers as the original seedling. To some of us it seems quite remarkable that for all time to come, even for hundreds of years, all divisions made from divisions of that original seedling, will continue to carry exactly the same flowers as the original one.

Mrs. Pleas gathered and planted peony seed every year, to grow more seedlings, to be divided into divisions, which she sold to visitors in her garden. We are told she had just two prices for them; for the ones whose flowers she thought most beautiful, she charged \$1.50 each or \$15.00 for a dozen. All the other plants she sold at \$1.00 each or \$10.00 per dozen.

The original peony lover in Van Wert, Miss Clara Anderson in some manner heard of Mrs. Pleas' garden, and eventually divisions from it, for herself and one other Van Wert flower lover were secured.

When these divisions were three years old I was called in to see them, and one individual plant named JUBILEE, (because it had first bloomed on the fiftieth anniversary of the day on which Mrs. Pleas had been married), was most artistically supported by a rustic framework. This plant whose beauty was enhanced by its artistic support was carrying several larger and more beautiful flowers than my mind had ever even conceived that nature could produce. These flowers gave me one of the four great thrills of my entire life. While I stood entranced with their beauty, every hair on my head seemed to stand erect as if in astonishment, and cold chills went up and down my spine, just exactly as they had done on a former occasion, when for the first time I, without notice, came face to face with Michel Angelo's "Moses," in the church, San Pietro in Vincoli, in Rome.

I instantly offered ten dollars for the plant, but neither of the Van Wert growers would sell, but Miss Anderson informed me that even though Mrs. Pleas had removed to Southern California, where peonies cannot be successfully grown, yet for \$5.00 she could secure a JUBILEE division from Mrs. Pleas' daughter, who had remained in Indiana.

I was delighted to get this opportunity to purchase a JUBILEE, but when the division arrived, we found that although it was of large size with five beautiful eyes (buds or sprouts), yet it had been so unskillfully cut, that one of the



nice eyes with a piece of root no larger in size than the first joint of my finger had become detached during the shipment.

I did not consider this very small root with one eye of any value, but as an experiment I planted it three feet distant from the very large root which possessed four eyes. I watered this small root several times during the fall and again during the following spring; the very small root with one eye sent up a very strong, vigorous stem which carried a large bloom; the big root with four eyes sent up four stems, none of them as tall or as vigorous as the plant with the single stem, and more surprising still, none of these stems carried any bloom. Two years later I divided both of these plants, and the one grown from the one eye division, gave me more divisions for planting stock, than the large root which started with four eyes.

And so it happened, that at least two years before I joined the peony society, and before I began to accumulate a stock of high priced peonies, I accidentally discovered the fact, that if properly planted, watered, and cultivated, peony divisions with a single eye are as valuable to a grower, and in some cases even more valuable, than divisions which are larger and carry many eyes.

However every reader of these lines should know, that if no attention is given to a new planting of peonies, that the larger roots with many eyes, can better withstand a long drought than the small divisions with single eyes, for I am convinced that the only use value the root itself possesses, is to furnish moisture for the growth, which is produced by the plant life, which resides in the eye.

But here is the sad part of the story. The five eye root sent by Mrs. Pleas' daughter, which developed so splendidly from its very small one eye division, was not JUBILEE at all. It was a smaller but very beautiful pink peony, which Mrs. Pleas had named OPAL. You know of course that at this stage of the game, OPAL was not a satisfactory substitute for JUBILEE, and I was more determined than ever to get one, and this is how I accomplished it.

I asked Miss Anderson what grower was the best informed peony man in the United States, and she gave me the name of E. J. Shaylor, of Auburndale, Massachusetts. I immediately wrote, asking him to give me a list of the five or six best peonies in his garden. In his reply he told me that "LE JOUR," a white single peony, with beautiful yellow stamens in the center, was the best peony of its class; that "PHILIPPE RIVOIRE" was the very best red double peony in the whole world and that it was fragrant; that "ALMA" was a pink Japanese peony of his own origination, which he wished to include in the class I asked about. He told me also that "FRANCES SHAYLOR" was a strikingly novel cream peony, because one half way between its center and circumference, it displayed a broad band of yellow stamens unlike any other peony he had ever seen; that "EXQUISITE" was a most beautiful and satisfactory pink landscape variety, which he had obtained from Kelway's garden in England; that "KELWAY'S GLORIOUS" was the largest and most beautiful white peony in the world, and I believe that his statement is just as true today, as it was twenty years ago. "MARY WOODBURY SHAYLOR" was a dwarf variety of light mottled pink color, which he thought good enough to name for his mother, and that "WILLIAM F. TURNER" was a splendid quality bright red peony, not so good however as "PHILIPPE RIVOIRE." In his letter which came with the list, he told me that he



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would furnish one five eye division of each of these very fine peonies, for \$94.00.

I immediately sent him my check, and when the plants arrived I took the package to Miss Anderson's garden, and asked her for the use of a very sharp knife. I immediately began cutting each division into two pieces, and when she asked my reason for doing this, I told her I intended to offer a division of each of these "finest peonies in the world," in exchange for a division of "JUBILEE." Realizing that these peonies had been selected by Mr. Shaylor, she was of course, very glad to make the trade, and so I came into possession of my first "JUBILEE."

No peony was ever planted with more care, and no plant ever responded more generously to the care bestowed upon it. During its second year in my garden, I made the discovery that there was an American Peony Society, and that it would hold a peony show in New York city during the first week in June. I immediately joined the society, and as the date for the show approached, I noticed that the buds on my "JUBILEE" plant were expanding at a pace that would bring them into bloom, at exactly the right time for the show. I visited both the original Van Wert owners of "JUBILEE," and told them of the advertised show of the American Peony Society, and also that it was their duty to take "JUBILEE," which we all considered the finest peony in the world, to the national show. Neither of them however would consider it, and so I decided that if they would not take it, that I most certainly would.

So it came to pass that I arrived in New York, with my box of precious peonies very early on the first morning of the show, which was held in the Museum of National History up near Central Park. When I entered the building I found only one person present, and he informed me that he was Professor A. P. Saunders, the secretary of the Peony Society, and after introducing myself, I asked to be allowed to watch him prepare his flowers for the show. I carefully observed everything he did, and then asking for vases in which I might exhibit my flowers, I got them ready and entered them in the contest for the best white peonies in the amateur class.

After I had them satisfactorily arranged, I noticed a gentleman entering the hall with a package in his hand, and he looked and acted very much as I had felt when I first entered the building, and so I approached him, introduced myself and asked him if I might help him place his flowers on exhibition. He seemed very glad to accept my help, and when we had his exhibit completed, I took him over to where my "JUBILEE" was displayed, and told him the story of the widow who raised peonies from seed, and how she had named this one JUBILEE because it bloomed first on the fiftieth anniversary of her wedding. I told him also what a thrill it had given me, when I first saw it, and it pleased me when he said it was a most beautiful peony.

Then I noticed a lady coming in with a package, and as she did not have any too much assurance, I introduced myself, and volunteered to help her display her peonies, and when I finished, I told her the story of JUBILEE. I kept busy all morning, helping strangers who were like me, attending their first peony show, and to each one of them I told the story of JUBILEE. As I was telling the story, a lady with a note book in her hand, but without any package,



approached me and said, "Will you kindly tell me the story I heard you telling a few moments ago?" which of course I was glad to do.

When it was concluded, she told me she was a reporter for an evening paper, and when I bought a copy of it, I found that a whole column had been given to the peony show, and that three fourths of the space was taken up with the story of Mrs. Pleas, her seedling peonies and JUBILEE.

At that show I was awarded a second prize in the amateur class, which with my present experience, I now know amounts to nothing, but I was delighted, and wired the news to Miss Anderson and her friend, and it was published in both of the daily papers. On the trip home, I wrote a general letter, telling of what had happened at the peony show, putting all of my enthusiasm into that one page letter. On my arrival home, I had my local printer make about two hundred copies of it and I mailed a copy to every member of the peony society.

There were less than two hundred members at that time and if any of these members of twenty years ago happens to read this story now, and has preserved that printed letter of 1916, I will make him a present of a division of the most precious peony in my garden, in exchange for it.

The next year JUBILEE again bloomed at exactly the right time for the National show, which was to be held in Philadelphia. This time I invited both my wife and daughter to accompany me; I engaged a lower berth in a sleeper for my wife and daughter; I took the upper one myself, and in addition engaged another lower one in which to carry "JUBILEE," with its stems submerged in a large jug of water. I doubt if any other flower has ever had a lower berth engaged for its sole occupancy.

Arriving at the exhibition hall, I followed the same plan I had used the preceeding year, helping "first time exhibitors" to display their flowers. While my daughter at that time about ten years old was helping me arrange my exhibit I was approached by a man carrying a camera and he asked, "May the little girl hold some flowers while I take a picture of them?" to which I replied, "Certainly, if it is my 'JUBILEES' which she holds," and while he was taking the picture, I related to him the story of the widow and her seedlings, and of JUBILEE, which I thought the most beautiful peony in the world. When he had completed his work he told me he was taking the picture for an evening newspaper, and that if I was willing, he would be glad to send a reporter to write up the JUBILEE story. I did not need to be coaxed, and the story was told. At noon the doors were closed to the public, the judges and exhibitors alone remaining in the hall.

As I was quite tired from my morning's work, and as I do not enjoy seeing my own flowers judged, I went to the hotel to rest for an hour or more. My nap was not finished when I heard the telephone bell ring, and Mrs. Bonnewitz asked me to come over to the exhibition hall at once. On the way over I purchased an evening paper and I was gratified to see that it contained a picture of my daughter holding a bunch of beautiful JUBILEES, and it also contained the full story I had given the reporter. I was greeted at the door by Mrs. Bonnewitz and Alice, both of whom were apparently delighted to tell me, that in a class of fourteen exhibits, JUBILEE had taken the most coveted of all prizes; the one for the best six blooms in the show.



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The cup of my enjoyment certainly was full for I realized that my senses had not played me false when my hair had tingled at its roots, and my spine had been a heat and cold conductor. On the trip home I wrote a story describing the show, and when I arrived home I had it published, in booklet form, and illustrated it with the same picture which had been used in the Philadelphia newspaper. This booklet was mailed to every member of the peony society whose numbers were larger than the previous year. Again following the 1918 show in Cleveland, I published a still larger booklet describing that show.

In 1920 the show was held in Reading, Pennsylvania, and as it was announced for exactly the right time for JUBILEE, I again entered it in competition for the prize for the six best blooms, and it again carried off the honors, and I sent out a much larger, better illustrated booklet than ever before, telling of the show, the winning varieties, and of the friends we had made.

Each year we hold a peony festival with a beautiful parade of elaborate floats followed later in the day by the crowning of Queen Jubilee, surrounded by her court of twelve most beautiful maidens, selected from the different high schools of our county.





# The Story of the Long Lost Peony

Years and years ago before the activities of any of the present members of the Peony Society and very probably even before the Peony Society was formed, a party of about thirty ladies and gentlemen were invited to visit a garden. I am not sure where that garden was located, because some versions of the story say Philadelphia, other versions say Boston and one lone but insistent version says New York. The only thing we absolutely know, is that the garden was in a city.

It was a beautiful garden and the guests enjoyed it, as all nature-lovers should; but the culminating point of the visit, the treat which the host had retained till the last, was a group of three peonies, which on that day were blooming to perfection. These peonies were screened from the rest of the garden by some shrubbery, and the host took particular interest in bringing all his guests together at this point at about the same time.

You should have heard the exclamations of surprise, pleasure, joy, and astonishment in the great beauty of the blooms, for no one in the United States, except the host, had ever seen such beautiful flowers. There they were, at least a dozen or fifteen main blooms on each plant, of a delicate flesh-pink, which while bleaching out to a paper-white, still retained the warmth of the pink. Each bloom had a spread of between six and eight inches and showed a golden glow at the center, and each of these main blooms was surrounded by three or four lateral blooms with a deeper and fresher shade of pink, but with the delicacy, size, and form of a water-lily. Is it any wonder that nature-lovers should go into ecstasies over such blooms?

When the excitement had subsided, the host explained that four years previously, in June, he had been traveling in England and that in a private garden he had found this beautiful peony, and because he had fallen in love with it, just as his guests were now doing, he had, at considerable expense, persuaded the owner to part with it. He had it shipped to his home city the following September, and when it arrived he had divided the original plant into the three which were blooming so prolifically before them.

All the versions of the story agree on two points. First: each one of the guests who owned a garden wanted at once to know how he could procure a plant exactly like these. Second: those poor unfortunates who lived in apartments and hotels felt anew their poverty of life even though they could write their checks for thousands, for possessions such as these were only for those who dwelt close to nature.

The host was not able to tell them the name of the nursery in England where the plants had been grown; but he promised to try to find, through the original owner of his plants, where they could be obtained. This he did, and so, late in July, or early in August, he was able to furnish the name of the nursery and to tell them that the price in England was 10s, 6d.

We have no means of knowing how many of them took advantage of this information; but all versions agree that not only guests at the original garden party, but also their friends who had been told of this most wonderful peony,



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sent orders and their money to the English grower, and you and I know how they told their friends of the beauty of the plants they were importing.

It is a wise providence that allows us to take pleasure in anticipation, and in this particular instance, the pleasure in anticipation was the only pleasure they received, for when the plants bloomed the first year, doubt came in, and when the second blooming season arrived, deep disappointment settled on every one of them. Not one of the many plants sent for, bloomed like the wonderful variety in the garden, and my most confident informant tells me there were eight different kinds sent, to fill orders for it.

Although all these peony enthusiasts were angry, yet their disappointment was far, far greater than their anger, for they had great reason to believe that the most beautiful flower in the world was forever lost, for the original plants of the garden had been accidentally destroyed. The garden, being in a city, had been sold for commercial purposes, and in early March, when the time came to make an excavation for a basement, no one thought of the dormant roots of the glorious peonies. The roots were carted away with the soil, to make a fill, where a fill was needed.

Some years later a lady from an eastern city visited some gardens in Chicago, and on her return to the east she told, among many other things, of having seen a peony which she thought very beautiful, particularly so, because while the main large bloom was nearly white, it was surrounded by four smaller blooms of pink, which looked like water-lilies.

She had never heard of the long lost peony; but in the course of the autumn or winter her story accidentally came to the ears of one of the gentlemen who had been at the garden party, and who had tried again and again, to secure the plant in England. When he heard the water-lily part of it, he was at once interested and in due time he found that the plant which had delighted the visitor in Chicago, had been purchased from a hardware merchant in a little town in Indiana.

Further investigation revealed the fact that this merchant was a peony enthusiast, and that he imported peonies direct from the same English grower who had disappointed so many eastern people. The eastern peony lover was so interested in the story and description of the plants in the western merchant's garden, that when spring came he decided to see this western peony himself. One story lands him in the western garden a week before the buds began to open.

We do not know how he spent the time in waiting, but we do know that when the blooms appeared, he was the happiest man in the country, for he had found that which was lost, and disappointment gave way to rejoicing. It is said he lost no time in notifying his friends who had sought with him this wonderful bloom, and that many were the letters that were sent to those who had changed their residence, but still held the memory of the garden scene.

Now up to this point, all versions of the story have had to rely upon the myths and legends of peonydom, and without doubt somewhat upon imagination, and I do not want anyone to judge of my veracity by his lack of belief in the truth of all the incidents here related, for I am giving it to you on just the same faith in which I tell it, and I trust you agree with me that it is an inter-



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esting story, but from now on, we are upon firm ground, for it is no longer hearsay but history.

I never saw any of the letters which were written about the LONG LOST PEONY, but I heard about them and with the story of the letters, I was told the story of the peony, just about as I have told it to you; then my informant wound up the whole story by saying, "And do you know those eastern peony people are paying twenty-five dollars each, for just one little root of the plant?" I confess that statement sounded interesting, and I could not drive the thought from my mind, that it must be a very, very fine peony that would cause anyone to give up for it, twenty-five dollars of good money. The more I thought about it, the more interested I became.

And so I finally asked, the "first peony lover I ever met," who owned "the first peony garden I ever saw" to find out for me, if possible, the name of the fortunate owner of that magnificent peony. When I had secured his name and address, I wrote and asked him to name me a price on six divisions of it, and upon receipt of his reply I was foolish enough to write my check and mail it, though I did not have the courage to tell any of my friends of my folly.

That check was written many years ago and the Long, Long Lost Peony, through its many divisions is still growing in my garden. with its own name prominently displayed beside it in letters large enough that even the chance visitor may read—LADY ALEXANDRA DUFF.





## The Peony With a War Story

The story of PEONY ALICE HARDING, originally named AMITIE AMERICAINE, as told me by Mr. Lemoine in his own garden in Nancy, France.

“Every year both before and during the war I planted peony seeds and every summer during the blooming season I spent some time observing and studying the blooms on the new seedlings. Early one summer morning in 1918, when the war was at its worst, I went into the seedling garden and I was surprised and delighted to find a peony blooming for the first time which had a flower more beautiful than any I had ever seen. As I was gazing upon its beauty, I heard the sound of martial music, and I felt the reverberations of the tread of marching men, and as I looked, I saw my first regiment of Americans coming to the aid of our war-worn French veterans.

“I was the father of three French soldiers, and instantly the hope came into my mind that, with the help of America, the war might be brought to a successful conclusion before I would lose all or perhaps even any of my three sons, and turning to my new-born peony I named it AMITIE AMERICAINE.”

He further said, “Mr. Bonnewitz, I think it is a beautiful name. Do not you also think it is a beautiful name?” And when he told me that AMITIE AMERICAINE meant “Love for America” or “Friendship for America,” I am sure you know that I agreed with him.

I immediately placed an order with him for one root of this new variety with the beautiful name, to be shipped as soon as I could get a permit from the United States government for its importation.

Before I departed he told me, that in exhibiting his new peony in the Paris show, it had won a prize offered by an American lady, and that she had reserved the right to name the peony which won her prize. He told me he hoped she would like the name AMITIE AMERICAINE, and he also told me that if she changed the name, he would write me, and that I should sell it under the name she selected.

I always use the new name in my catalogues and price lists, for the original name is interesting only in a garden story such as this one I have told you.

## Gratis Plants

When I was a boy, ten to fifteen years old, my father had a country store. In those days the farmers' wives usually made only two trips to town each year, to procure their supply of dry goods. The smaller children usually came with the mother, and when the trading was completed, my father made it a practice to give to the smaller children, gifts of some kind; a handkerchief, a pair of mittens, a little book, or toy. These gifts to the children pleased the parent fully as much as the child, and goodwill for the store was created. The children to whom those gifts were given, are now men and women of sixty and seventy years, but even yet, some of these elderly people speak to me of the gifts my father gave them, and the smile of appreciation is still upon their countenances.

The first peonies I imported were from Mr. Lemoine of Nancy, France, and in that very first shipment he included a gratis plant of the hybrid tree peony, L'ESPERANCE, and every time I look at that gift peony, it brings a kindly feeling for Mr. Lemoine.

The garden business is today in its infancy, even as the Bonnewitz Dry Goods business was in its infancy fifty or sixty years ago. When I first began selling peonies, I adopted my father's practice of building goodwill among my garden customers, by including in each shipment a gratis plant or two. I believe that my customers appreciate them, even as I still appreciate the gift Mr. Lemoine gave me twenty years ago, and it is a pleasure to me to continue to follow in the steps of my father and of Mr. Lemoine.



## A Shaylor Story

Every one who has read my JUBILEE story, knows that it was to Mr. Shaylor that I was indebted for learning early in the game, that I should grow KELWAY'S GLORIOUS, PHILIPPE RIVOIRE and LE JOUR. It was good advice which he gave me, and here is another story in which his advice brought very quick returns.

Immediately after the National show in Philadelphia, I received a personal letter from Mr. Shaylor, from whom I had bought my very finest peonies, and who had always sent me the largest size divisions with the greatest number of eyes. In this letter he informed me, that although I undoubtedly had seen very beautiful peonies at the show, yet he had a new seedling growing in his garden under the Number "35," a division of which would produce for me in my own garden, a finer bloom than anything I had seen in the show, and that for a remittance of \$30.00, he would send me a division of this wonderful peony.

Having implicit confidence in him, for every root he had previously sold me had grown true to name, and all the divisions had been of good size with at least five eyes, I immediately sent him my check. When the root arrived I found it pleased me perfectly, for it was of good size and it had six strong healthy eyes, and I well remember the happy half hour I spent in skillfully dividing this root into six one eye divisions, and you may be assured that each one of them was well planted and regularly given the necessary amount of water.

The following year a prize of one hundred dollars was offered at the National peony show to be held in Cleveland, to be awarded to the grower who produced a seedling peony, better than any other seedling ever originated in America, and surprise of surprises for me, when the award was made, Shaylor's seedling Number "35" was unanimously voted the winner of this, the best prize ever offered in a National Peony show. Its name was changed to MRS. EDWARD HARDING, and I was delighted to know that I had six, one year old plants of that variety growing in my garden.

Two years later in 1920, I embarked in the business of selling peony roots, and during the first two weeks of my selling campaign, I sold from my original division of this now very famous variety, five full size divisions at \$100.00 each, giving me a \$500.00 return upon the original \$30.00 invested, and allowing me planting stock for future business.

I feel quite sure that I was the first grower in the country to realize the value of one eye divisions, but I believe that every grower in Van Wert realizes it now, because I have visited all six of the local commercial peony gardens, and in all of them the majority of the one year plants have but a single stem.

It is my opinion that if in peony plantings, all but one of the stems which come up from the division the first year, were broken off, and the root allowed to expend all its strength on the single stem, that the plant would be more vigorous, and produce better divisions than if several stems were allowed to grow the first year. While I will continue to sell two eye divisions, I hope some of my customers will try two divisions of the same variety and size, and allow only one stem on one of them to grow, and observe whether their experiences are similar to mine.

## Jubilee and Peony Supports

Readers who look over the varieties which may be substituted in my collection offers, will find that JUBILEE is included in the list. To garden lovers who are learning of JUBILEE for the first time, I wish to say, that while JUBILEE, if properly cared for, will continue to produce just as fine flowers as those I first saw many years ago, and as fine as those which won highest honors in National Shows, yet it has stems which are not strong enough to carry the very heavy, very large flowers, and no one should purchase and plant it, unless he is willing to give it the support which it needs, and which it deserves.

The Adams Company of Dubuque, Iowa, build peony supports made of strong galvanized wire, which please me better than anything else I have seen. Your local hardware store can procure them for you.

There may be better metal or wood supports for peonies than those I have told about, and if there are, I will be glad to know of them.



## A Wonderful New Peony

I have visited the gardens of the most celebrated peony men both in America and in Europe, but in none of them have I received the same inspiration which I found in the garden of my good friend Doctor Neeley, of Paulding, Ohio. But my friend has gone from earth and I will miss him and his garden.

He knew plants, shrubs and trees better than any other man I ever met, and it was surprising how much of his knowledge came from his own observations. God had given him an intuitive love of nature, and had endowed him with a keen mind which instantly grasped the relationship between different forms of plant and animal life, for he saw God's laws working in all of them. His help has been invaluable to me, and it was a pleasure to notice how men would journey long distances to meet him and be proud ever after to speak of him as friend.

On one of my visits ten or twelve years ago, he showed me a beautiful dark red poppy which he had grown from seed, and which was blooming for the first time. I am sure now, that in those days of my business activities, my appreciations were influenced too much by money values. Instead of telling him of the beauty which I could see in this new seedling to which he had given his wife's name, Lula A. Neeley, I instantly said, "Doctor, that poppy is worth a hundred dollars."

Two years later when he had accumulated some stock, I wrote a description of it and published it in an attractive booklet, in which I offered it for sale at twenty-five dollars per root. The response was generous and during the rest of his life we were equal partners in this poppy and each of us received several times the amount of money I envisioned on my first sight of it.

The Doctor gave me of everything in his own garden and I in turn gave him freely of mine. Four years ago he gave me a root of a new seedling peony which he had named MRS. J. H. NEELEY, and that peony gave me this year, a thrill equal to that of JUBILEE many years ago. To understand it, let me tell you this little story:

Over thirty years ago Mrs. Bonnewitz and I were in Rome, at Easter time, and as it was our first trip, there was much to see, yes, far too much to expect to retain it all in memory. There was one picture, however, a picture in a palace, I believe, which I will never forget, for in it I saw the colors of the dawning day painted by the hand of man as I had never seen them before. In it a goddess was driving the chariot horses of the rising sun, which, itself, was yet below the horizon. The color of that sunrise has remained with me until this day, but nowhere had I seen it until the very last Monday in which peonies bloomed in my garden and then at three o'clock in the afternoon on the face of peony MRS. J. H. NEELEY, I found it again. That color without a trace of blue, violet, or lavender is the color the peony hybridizers have, for years, been seeking.

Of course I was excited with my thoughts of the future of that



peony, but I kept my feet on the ground and hastened with the cut flowers to show them first to my sister and her husband, and then to the Wassenbergs, so that others may know of the existence of this long sought-for color.

How I would like to be able now to say to the Doctor: "That peony of yours is worth a hundred dollars," and then, from the sale of its divisions, during the coming years, divide several times that amount with him. He is gone. But his widow—yes, he would want her to have and enjoy his share. So let us see what this new peony will do for Mrs. Neeley.

## Commercial Peony Growers in Van Wert

Miss Anderson and Mr. Germann, the two original Jubilee enthusiasts of Van Wert have both passed on, and Miss Anderson's garden has ceased to exist. Mrs. L. J. Germann is continuing her husband's garden at its original location on South Washington Street. Since Miss Anderson's death, this is now the oldest peony garden in town.

Mr. C. F. Wassenberg, a director of the American Peony Society, has, I believe, either the largest, or at least the second largest, combined peony and Iris farm in the United States. It is located on the Lincoln highway five miles east of Van Wert. You can see more fine Iris and fine peonies in this garden than in any other garden in Ohio. His beautiful home garden on South Washington Street is visited by thousands of flower lovers during the blooming season.

Mr. H. T. Beckman, a man of wealth and good taste, purchased a few years ago, a farm with the ideal location for a most beautiful peony garden. This farm is located three miles east of Van Wert on the Lincoln highway, and in a clearing in the original forest, Mr. Beckman has established his exhibition gardens just as Mr. E. C. Shaw of North Portage Path in Akron did a few years ago. This beautiful garden is equipped with an attractive garden gate and gate keeper's lodge; an artistic garden house, and best of all, a large, convenient, well arranged and splendidly kept parking space for visitors. Mr. Beckman's garden will during his life, keep Van Wert as the outstanding peony center of the United States, for he undoubtedly established it as a matter of civic pride and loyalty. The citizens of Van Wert are proud to have the opportunity of showing it to visitors.

Doctor A. B. Himes has a garden of three or four acres at his home on South Washington Street, in which he is carrying out his own ideas as to garden decoration. His outdoor work and his enthusiasm have given him health and happiness, and it is a pleasure to visit him in his garden. The number of his garden visitors is exceeded only by those to the Beckman and Wassenberg gardens.

D. R. Carey on Allingham Street in the northwest part of town has a peony and gladiolus garden which is not so large as the others, but if I am not mistaken, it brings to him a better return on his investment, than the rest of us enjoy.



## As the Years Are Passing

I have a physical life, and at the age of sixty-eight, I am enjoying health of body.

I have an intellectual life, and my magazines, my books, my contacts with intellectual men and women and last of all my own thoughts and meditations bring me more satisfaction than in earlier life.

I have a spiritual life which was dormant, but which has been awakened and stimulated into growth by the events which the depression has brought. This spiritual awakening and growth has brought a new zest into my life; a zest which I would like to share with everybody with whom I come in contact.

I would like to be a member of a club of men of my own age and older, who would share with each other their intellectual and spiritual experiences, in the hope that we might help each other to higher planes of thinking. What a satisfaction to each, if such a club, (a club without fees—without dues—without officers—and even without a meeting place), could bring to us the knowledge, that the world in which we have been living is growing better.





